

To Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers and Representative Steinberg and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Dhrupad Nag and I am here representing Connecticut Working Families in standing in staunch support of HB 5764 - An Act Concerning The Licensing of Barbers and Hairdressers, which will remove criminal history restrictions from licensing applications for individuals seeking to become barbers and hairdressers

We believe that if the state is truly invested in the rehabilitation of formerly incarcerated people, it should be aggressive in pursuing common sense policies that encourage financial stability for people who have already paid back their debt to society. Recidivism rates drops from 32% to 19% for those who become gainfully employed after they are released so it is incumbent on the state to remove high barriers to employment for the formerly incarcerated. This bill does so by giving ex-offenders greater access to occupations that coincide with common job-training programs offered in state prisons.

This is even more important when taking into account the racial dynamics at play. Removing these restrictions are critical in addressing extrajudicial consequences of a criminal conviction that are most frequently borne by black and hispanics ex-offenders. Only 1/3 of black men with criminal convictions get a call back from jobs they applied to compared to 1/2 of all people with criminal convictions.

In short, this bill promotes increasing access to occupations that are more suited to those who have served time in prison, allowing formerly incarcerated peoples an opportunity to rebuild their lives, regain autonomy over their own lives and have the resources to take care of themselves and their family. For these reasons, CT Working Families strongly stands in support of HB 5764 and urges the committee to vote this bill out of committee.

Thank you.